

THE
ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

TO THE
LOOE URBAN DISTRICT
COUNCIL

FOR THE YEAR 1908.

LISKEARD :

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LOOE URBAN DISTRICT.

AREA—547 ACRES. POPULATION (CENSUS 1901) 2,535; ESTIMATED 2,601.

THE ANNUAL REPORT

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MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH,

FOR THE YEAR 1908.

To the Urban District Council.

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to present to you the Annual Report of the health and sanitary state of this district.

PHYSICAL FEATURES & GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE DISTRICT.

I do not think I can add much to what I have written in former years on the question of the physical features and general character of our district. Their excellence is well known to all those who live here, and the general public is learning, though slowly, to appreciate them. At almost every station on the great railway line, which brings so many visitors to Cornwall, advertisements may be seen which speak of the English Riviera, with notices especially referring to that portion of the Southern Cornish coast, which is near to the Land's End. To my mind, if there is (and I certainly think that there is) any part of the English coast which may justly be called "The Riviera," the name should be applied to the Southern Cornish coast; but I believe that a study of the coast line must induce others as it has me (as has also a study of the climatic conditions) to reserve the name of the English Riviera for that portion of the coast which is included between the Rame Head and Dodman Point. The most sheltered part of this stretch of coast line is known as Whitsand Bay—a bay of which our Looe harbour forms the western limit. Some day this sunny stretch of coast, which is so well protected from the cold, will receive the attention it justly deserves. The climatic conditions on this portion of the coast are not only good, but nature has done much to render it attractive by adding scenic charms. I need only mention the wild, bold rocky headlands, which vie with those on the northern coast, to be seen near Polperro, and the wooded slopes of the coast line which stretch from Looe away towards Rame Head. Here, in my opinion, is the spot for the development of a winter health resort of the first magnitude. From the weather charts of the last eight years it will be seen that no sudden or great variations occur in our temperature. Those charts show that the average temperature in August, for the last eight years, has been 66.9 degrees, while in December, over the same period, it has been 49.6 degrees. The charts give us an average temperature for the spring months, 55.9 degrees; summer months, 66.3 degrees; autumn, 59.3 degrees; winter, 49.3 degrees.

In Looe we have, as additional recommendations, a safe roadstead, a tidal harbour, a beautiful river, the banks of which are richly wooded to the water's edge, and a quaint old town full of historical interest. We have also building land at Looe, and a well-laid-out building estate at Hannaford. Year by year I note a greater patronage of our district by those who, returning from the hot climes of India, are seeking health in the old land, and in it a mild and equable climate.

It is with much pleasure that I am able to report that your Sanitary Authority has shown wise and considerate activity during the last twelve months, and that very important sanitary improvements have been carried forward in our midst, improvements which before the return of next summer will be completed. As the Looe line of railway has now passed under the control of the Great Western Railway, and has thus become a finger of a great system which freely advertises the advantages of the watering places to which it is able to convey the public, we must in the near future expect a steady augmentation of our residential and visiting population. How necessary is it therefore for the Sanitary Authority to continue to improve with all possible speed the sanitation of the town! I deem it necessary to draw attention to the fact that the accommodation the towns are able to offer to visitors is quite inadequate, and that it is insufficient both as regards space-room and the requirements which a summer visiting population expects to find.

HOUSING ACCOMMODATION.

During the year there has been very little advance made in the building programme. I refer especially to the building of dwellings for the working classes. Times have been so bad and difficult in the fishing industry that there has been very little desire on the part of the labouring classes to change their abodes. I can bear witness to the marked improvement that has taken place in the health of many of those families who have removed from the vicinity of Church-end to the higher levels, and I hope with the return of more prosperous times that we shall see a renewed activity in the building of small houses on the higher levels for the better housing of the labouring classes.

SEWERAGE AND DRAINAGE.

It is chiefly under this heading that I have to report that much good work has been done. The building of the public convenience at

Church-end is a great advance, and has made good, in that part of our town, a want of many years standing. The commencement of the drainage scheme to abate the nuisance caused by the out-fall from the drains over the West Looe quay shows the determination of your Authority to deal, as circumstances will allow, with existing defects. It is a wise thing to prove the advantage by dividing this scheme into two parts, and to complete the north end half first. I believe that it will be found that the advantages derived will justify the adoption. It is interesting to record that the plan now being carried out was formulated many years ago by the late Joseph Thomas, M.I.C.E. I hope that during the ensuing year the Shutta main drain may be relaid, and that the necessity of dealing with the condition of the defective old culverts in the neighbourhood of the Guildhall will not be lost sight of.

REMOVAL AND DISPOSAL OF HOUSE REFUSE.

A marked improvement has taken place in the custom of the people as regards the receptacle used for the household refuse. A covered receptacle is now almost universally used. There are, however, still a few offending in this respect. I desire to ask your Authority to deal with these cases. Your Authority should forbid the use of other than covered galvanised iron receptacles for this purpose.

WATER SUPPLY OF THE DISTRICT.

It has proved adequate for our needs. The public service is derived from the reservoirs situated at Weyland and Wringworthy. I hope one day your Authority will see its way to precipitate the lime salts which are in too great a quantity in the water. As so many of the houses are now fitted with a hot water system for baths, the deposition of lime in the boilers and pipes gives rise to much inconvenience and expense.

SLAUGHTER-HOUSES, DAIRIES, MILK SHOPS, &c.

The slaughter-houses, dairies, and milk-shops on inspection have been found in a satisfactory condition. The people still suffer from the grave nuisance which arises from the way in which the milch cows are driven through the streets to and from the milking sheds. It is to my mind almost impossible to keep the streets in a proper condition while this practice is continued. The complaints made to me have been very numerous and bitter on this question. The abolition of the milking sheds in the town would greatly benefit the sanitary condition of some of the most uninviting spots in our district. I trust that the time is not far distant when all private slaughter-houses will be done away with. A public abattoir far removed from the business and residential parts would, indeed, be a blessing to this town.

PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS.

The chief interest has centred around the medical inspection of children in the Council Schools. The duties of inspection have been specially entrusted to medical officers acting for large areas and engaged in that work alone. I believe that the benefit that the State hoped to derive from this act will be

almost nullified by the method adopted for carrying out the duties. I think that each small area should have been placed under the personal care of a selected local practitioner.

METHODS OF DEALING WITH INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

We are still without a full armament in case of a serious outbreak of contagious disease. I refer to the absence of any isolation hospital. I find that the number of unvaccinated children is steadily increasing, and the day will surely come, if the present lax vaccination laws remain in force, when the awful scourge of small-pox will seize hold of and decimate our crowded areas, as it did in days of old. It would be at least wise that every arrangement should be made by the Council to fight an epidemic, should one unfortunately arise. The typhoid cases that caused so much anxiety in the commencement of the year clearly point out the wisdom of being able to isolate infectious and contagious disease.

FACTORIES AND WORKSHOPS.

There has been no call for any special sanitary report in connection with the Factory and Workshops Act, 1901.

INSPECTION OF THE DISTRICT.

While some marked improvement in the general condition of the streets has been noticeable, and the custom of throwing garbage into the roads has certainly been less frequent than it used to be, yet I cannot think over the condition in which I have seen our streets on many occasions without expressing a very earnest hope that they may be better kept. In our chief streets, after rain, the mud is great, and in dry weather the dust is, of course, proportionately distressing, and more than deleterious to the health of the community. The better keeping of the streets is a matter that can be easily attended to, and I trust that the Council will give my recommendation due consideration.

DISEASE INCIDENCE.

The district has again been free from epidemic infectious disease. The enteric fever cases, shown in Table III, had origin in a house with defective drains. The latter are but too often the cause of serious trouble, and I feel that it cannot be too widely known that any householder can have the drains of his dwelling tested by making application to the Sanitary Authority. The cases of scarlet fever, two in number, were introduced by persons returning from taking holidays in large centres. Happily, the infection did not spread. The Public Health Regulation Act, 1903, for the notification of tuberculosis, is a step in the right direction, but I fear its area of effect is too limited. This notification should be extended so as to embrace all classes. Since it has been shown by the tubercular test that about 30 per cent. of the milch cows are tubercular, it should be widely known that by boiling milk for one minute the tubercle bacillus is destroyed. I think it is just as important for mothers who are rearing their infants by hand to know this fact, as it is for the guardians of children and young adults at school. Many, I doubt not, are liable through hereditary disposition

or from some other cause to fall victims to this disease. There is overwhelming evidence that tubercular cows ought never to be used to supply milk for human food.

BIRTHS.

The total number of births recorded during the year was 44, against 80 in 1907. There were born 24 males and 20 females—28 in East Looe and 16 in West Looe. This is an estimated birth-rate of 16.85 per 1,000, as contrasted with a rate of 30.75, which I recorded in last year's report.

MORTALITY.

The total number of deaths recorded during the year was 31, viz., 13 males and 18 females—21 in East Looe and 10 in West Looe. This gives an estimated death-rate of 11.87 per 1,000 of the population. The causes of death were as follows:—Old age, 6; phthisis, 4; paralysis, 3; cancer, 1; bronchitis, 1; heart disease, 6; kidney disease, 3; pneumonia, 2; enteric fever, 1; other diseases, 4. Twelve deaths occurred at the age of 70 and upwards, viz., two at 86, one at 75, one at 84, one at

82, one at 79, one at 76, one at 73, two at 71, and two at 70.

INFANT MORTALITY.

The death-rate per 1,000 births was 45.45.

ZYMOTIC DEATH-RATE.

The zymotic death-rate was .40 per 1,000.

ZYMOTIC DISEASE.

Six cases of zymotic disease were notified during the year, viz., four cases of enteric and two cases of scarlet fever. These figures give a zymotic disease-rate of 23.97 per 1,000.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

JOHN EUSTACE WEBB,

M.B., F.R.I.P.H.,

M.O.H. Looe Urban District Council.

Kerswill House, Looe,

15th January, 1909.

